



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# THE QUARTERLY

OF THE

TEXAS STATE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION.

Vol. VI.

JANUARY, 1903.

No. 3.

*The publication committee and the editor disclaim responsibility for views expressed by contributors to THE QUARTERLY.*

## THE TAMPICO EXPEDITION.

EUGENE C. BARKER.

The Tampico expedition was an episode in the Texas revolution. Its success would almost certainly have changed the course of the war and, perhaps, averted the declaration of independence, but it has received scant attention from the historians, and its relation to the larger movement has never been shown.<sup>1</sup> Its origin and purpose can be better understood after a general survey of Mexican political conditions from 1833 to 1835.

In February, 1833, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna and Valentin Gomez Farías, representing the liberal and progressive party, were elected, respectively, president and vice-president of Mexico. At the expiration of President Pedraza's term, March 31, 1833, Santa Anna was absent from the capital, and Vice-President Farías took charge of the government. Except for several brief intervals, Santa Anna remained in retirement until April, 1834, while Farías inaugurated a reform policy favored by the moderate branch of his

<sup>1</sup>This statement should be understood as applying only to the expedition proper. After his return from Tampico, Mexia tried to get the provisional government of Texas to aid him in fitting out a second expedition. This question became involved in the quarrel which was going on between the governor and the general council, and has been pretty clearly set forth by Mr. W. Roy Smith.—See QUARTERLY, Vol. V, No. 4.

party. But during his year of seclusion Santa Anna changed his opinions and became the leader of reaction. This drew to his support the clergy and the military, and on April 24, 1834, he finally assumed the executive power. A month later he dissolved the national congress and many of the State legislatures, dismissed his ministers, and ruled as dictator. A subservient congress was called in January, 1835, and began working toward the legitimization of the existing despotism. Vice-President Farias was first declared deposed; in March a decree ordered that the militia be reduced to one for every five hundred inhabitants and that the balance be disarmed; in May congress was declared competent to reform the constitution of 1824; and on October 3 a decree declared the establishment of a centralized government. These measures produced great excitement, and federalist insurrections broke out or were threatened in various parts of the country, while Zacatecas and Coahuila and Texas refused entire to accept the new system. But centralism was in the ascendant, and the insurrections were suppressed, Zacatecas was declared in rebellion and subdued with great harshness, and preparation was made for the subjugation of Texas. These successes of the dictator drove many of the liberals into exile, and among those who found a refuge in New Orleans were George Fisher and José Antonio Mexia, who determined to organize and lead from there an expedition in a final effort to restore the federal system.

Fisher reached New Orleans on October 9, 1835,<sup>1</sup> where he found sentiment already high in favor of the opposition which Texas was offering to Santa Anna. The moderate party had the upper hand in Texas at this time, and were determined to uphold the constitution of 1824, so that their cause was identical with that of the Mexican liberals. The leading Texas sympathizers and some of the exiled federalists had already been holding conferences, and when Fisher joined them it was decided to call a public mass meeting and make an appeal for volunteers and contributions in behalf of Texas. A meeting was accordingly held at Banks's Arcade on the evening of October 13. William Christy presided and James Ramage acted as secretary. The chairman explained the object of the meeting and appointed a committee to draft resolutions, and while this was in retirement requested Fisher to describe the politi-

<sup>1</sup>Fisher's *Memorials*, 11.—Archives of Texas, C. File 28, No. 16.

cal situation in Mexico and the measures which were being taken to subdue Texas and the federalists elsewhere. After speeches had also been made by Mr. Gustavus Schmidt, a New Orleans lawyer, and A. de O. Santangelo, editor of the *Correo Atlantico*, a liberal Mexican newspaper published in New Orleans, the committee reported seven resolutions which were unanimously adopted.<sup>1</sup> These expressed the warmest sympathy for the Texans and promised every assistance which the neutrality laws of the United States would permit; provided for the appointment of a committee of six—afterwards increased to eight—to correspond with the provisional government of Texas and to receive donations; and authorized the officers of the meeting to open a list immediately for the enrollment of such as would volunteer “for the aid of the Texians, in defense of their rights.” The power of the committee in the disposition of the funds that might be contributed was unrestricted, they were “authorized to receive such donations as may be given for the relief of our brethren in Texas, and to appropriate the same in such manner as, in the opinion of the majority of them, may be deemed most expedient for the interests of the noble cause in which they are engaged.” More than a thousand dollars was subscribed and a number of volunteers were enrolled before the meeting adjourned.<sup>2</sup>

The committee did quick and effective work. Within a week seven thousand dollars had been raised, and two well equipped companies, aggregating a hundred and fifteen men, had been forwarded to Texas. Also—under the inspiration of Fisher and General Mexia, perhaps—it determined to assist in the equipment of a small force to attack Tampico, in the hope of stirring up in the eastern States an insurrection which would prevent Santa Anna from sending troops to Texas. On October 20, Messrs. Christy and Ramage, acting for the committee, wrote to inform the provisional government of the measures which had been taken for their relief.

<sup>1</sup>Extract from *The New Orleans Bee*, October 14, 1835, in Fisher's *Memoirs*, 29-30.

<sup>2</sup>Extract from *The New Orleans Commercial Bulletin* (no date) in *The Telegraph and Texas Register*, October 31, 1835.

The committee appointed consisted of James H. Caldwell, Wm. Bogart, James P. Nevin, Wm. L. Hodge, and Thomas Banks. William Christy and James Ramage were added by a special resolution, and practically assumed direction of the committee.

and stated that this expedition, numbering "about one hundred and fifty *efficient emigrants*" would sail in a week.<sup>1</sup> At the same time Fisher announced the plan to Austin. An answer from the Texans could not be expected before the expedition sailed, but their approval was assumed, and correctly, as the event showed. For the consultation on November 8, after a consideration of the report from New Orleans, tendered to the people of that city their "most grateful acknowledgements," and assured them that "any who embark in our cause, in the army or navy, shall be liberally rewarded";<sup>2</sup> while Austin, apropos of Fisher's letter, doubtless, wrote from Bexar on November 5, urging the convention to give the expedition every encouragement. He seemed, however, to favor a descent upon Matamoras rather than Tampico. "Nothing," he declared, "will aid Texas so much as an expedition from N. Orleans against Matamoras under Gen'l Mexia. It is *all* important. I recommend that every possible effort be made to fit out such an expedition, if it has not already been done. . . . If Matamoras is attacked and revolutionized by Mexia, Bexar would fall as a matter of course, for all supplies of funds or Troops would be cut off; there is no way in which funds or men could be employed to so much advantage to Texas. . . . This enterprise merits the full attention of the convention, an express at any expense should be sent to the committee of N. Orleans urging this expedition. . . . Even a *rumor* of such a thing would keep troops from being sent to Texas."<sup>3</sup>

In the meantime, Mexia had been delayed in getting off, and on October 29 he wrote to Thomas F. McKinney, of Quintana, and enclosed a full account of his plan with the request that it be placed before "the Gentlemen Directors of public affairs in Texas." He believed that he could best serve the cause which they were all supporting, he explained, by making an attack upon the coast of Mexico; at Tampico he had prepared for the co-operation of the resident liberals, and success was sure "unless some unforeseen cir-

<sup>1</sup>*Journal of the Proceedings of the Consultation*, 24; also Fisher's *Memoirs*, 47.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 25. One naturally wonders if this reference to the navy was meant to apply directly to the Tampico expedition. There is no way of determining, but I am of the opinion that it was.

<sup>3</sup>Austin to Provisional Government, November 5, 1835.—Archives of Texas, File 1, No. 8, Diplomatic Correspondence.

cumstance should intervene;" but in that case he would be notified by his friends upon his arrival, and would then turn his force against Matamoras. Concerning the strength of the liberals in Mexico, he said, "You need not have the least doubt but that in the interior public sentiment is generally in our favor—and that the people are only waiting for an opportunity to throw off the yoke that the servile party have made so heavy on their necks. Daily I am receiving communications from the interior, and lately I have received from the Governor of Tamaulipas an invitation to join in a reaction against tyranny, in such terms that so soon as we shall present ourselves, we shall have a force sufficient for the triumph of liberal principles."<sup>1</sup>

The convention, it would seem, agreed with Austin and Mexia as to the desirability of creating such a diversion as this in Mexico. At least, a select committee of six,<sup>2</sup> reporting on Austin's recommendation on November 13, declare that they regard the subject as "important, and concur with the views of the commanding general, as to its certain effects of crippling the enemy and distracting his movements. Your committee, however, from documents now in their possession, have it in their power to inform this house, that a small force of one hundred and fifty men, commanded by General Mexia, armed and equipped at his own expense, has sailed from New Orleans for the port of Tampico or Matamoras, and that a descent from that quarter, from whatever source, in the opinion of your committee, will produce the consequences of annoying the enemy, . . . and prevent reinforcements being sent to Bexar. Should further operations, hereafter, seem expedient in aiding the enterprise of General Mexia, it enters into the duties of the governor and council of Texas."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Mexia to the Gentlemen Directors of Public Affairs in Texas, October 29, 1835. Translation by L. de Zavala.—Archives of Texas, File 13, No. 1251, Diplomatic Correspondence.

<sup>2</sup>They were Messrs. Barrett, A. Huston, Martin, Macomb, Williamson, and Zavala.—*Journal of the Proceedings of the Consultation*, 37.

<sup>3</sup>*Journal of the Proceedings of the Consultation*, 40. The Mexican authorities, too, realized the importance of the expedition. Filisola says (*Memorias para la Historia de la Guerra de Tejas*, II, 189) that the success of Mexia would have made their projected invasion of Texas impossible, and would have rendered temporarily useless the troops collected for the defense of Bexar, Matamoras, and the States of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon.

I have presented this correspondence and the attitude of Texas toward the expedition at length, because all of the historians have practically agreed in representing the affair as an enterprise for the personal aggrandizement of General Mexia, and have neglected entirely to show its bearing upon Texas.<sup>1</sup>

On November 4, Christy and Ramage wrote to the provisional government and Fisher wrote to Austin again to say that the expedition would leave New Orleans on the 6th in the schooner "Mary Jane."<sup>2</sup> Two commissioners had previously been sent to Tampico to notify the federalists there and to arrange for the safe landing of the expedition by gaining over the garrison that guarded the bar and the crew of the tug used to tow sailboats into harbor. No difficulty was anticipated in this direction, and, as haste was essential to the success of the enterprise, Mexia did not wait for a report from his commissioners. He arrived off the bar of Tampico November 14, and was considerably disconcerted when the pilot boat came alongside, about four o'clock in the afternoon, to find that the captain knew nothing of his plans. He was fortunate enough, however, to win the captain on the spot, but the failure of the commissioners here caused him to fear that they had been equally unsuccessful in the fort, and he decided to delay his landing until dark, in order to conceal from the soldiers the nature of his cargo. Through this resolution he came to grief. In the darkness, both the tug and the schooner ran aground on the bar, and, after vainly trying to get them off until two o'clock in the morning, the men were ordered to wade ashore. Here they found that the garrison had really been prepared for their coming and were ready to join them, but the loss of time occasioned by their ship-

<sup>1</sup>See Kennedy, II 154-55; Yoakum, II 36-7; Thrall, 219, 590; Bancroft, II 189-90; Brown, I 441.

<sup>2</sup>Archives of Texas, File 3, No. 277, Diplomatic Correspondence; and Vol. 3, p. 47 of records in vault No. 1.

Filisola says (*Memorias*, etc., II 190) that they had three vessels, and Bancroft in his *History of Mexico* (V 146), has followed him. This is a mistake, however, and may perhaps be accounted for by the fact that after the attack upon Tampico had been repulsed, the authorities established a partial embargo and refused several American vessels admission to the port, among them the "Kanawha," which, it was said, had a cargo of provisions for Mexia (See *Niles' Register*, XLIX, 339). In his *North Mexican States and Texas*, Bancroft declares there was only one vessel.

wreck had made it impossible to reach Tampico during that night, so that the day which was to have seen Mexia in possession of the town found him established in the fort, drying his muskets and foraging for fresh ammunition.

All Mexia's ill luck may be traced to a combination of circumstances in Tampico which nobody could have foreseen. His commissioners had succeeded in winning over two officers of the troops stationed there, and they, in turn, began negotiations with the soldiers; but they had only gained part of these when an indiscretion of some of their civilian friends threatened to expose the plot, and forced them to a premature rising on the night of November 13. Unfortunately, a new company of the battalion of Tuxpan had just arrived, and with this and such of the other soldiers as remained faithful the commandant, Gregorio Gomez, was able to put down the riot and arrest the leaders. When news of this disaster reached a party of the liberals who were awaiting Mexia at the bar, they returned to town, in order that his expedition might not be suspected.<sup>1</sup>

It was not until five o'clock in the afternoon of November 15 that Mexia—reinforced by thirty-five to fifty Mexicans<sup>2</sup>—could get his troops in condition to take up the march on the city. Of the attack I shall allow him to tell the story:

"It was between 12 and 1 o'clock in the night when we entered the town. From six in the afternoon Commt. Gomez knew of our landing, and it also appeared he was informed by the English consul of our having taken up our line of march for the city. With this foreknowledge he was prepared with a force of about two hundred and fifty or three hundred men, with whom he fortified the terrace roofs of three houses and erected a battery in the Custom House, the principal point of his defense.

"As my ammunition was short, I ordered on no account should the enemy be fired at, but to approach them as near as possible and then charge with the bayonet as soon after the first discharge of cannon as practicable; by so doing I succeeded in gaining my object, as in two minutes we had dislodged the enemy and taken

<sup>1</sup>Filisola, *Memorias*, etc., II 190; Mexia to Governor of Texas, December 7, 1835.—Archives of Texas, File 13, No. 1256, Diplomatic Correspondence.

<sup>2</sup>Edward, *History of Texas*, 265.



two pieces of cannon, obliging them to shut themselves up in the fortified houses, whence they fired on us. Disorder appearing among a part of our raw recruits, and the absolute want of cartridges to keep up the attack, it being necessary to keep up a strong fire to dispossess the fortified houses, all this united to the weariness of the troops arising from the shipwreck and the fatigues of the march, decided me to retreat after consulting with Capts. Allen and Lambert (the only Capts. who maintained their character as soldiers) whether they thought they could follow up the attack in the present state of the troops. We had 8 killed and as many more wounded, also 20 who had deserted the ranks and who dispersing themselves in the City in the commencement of the attack were taken prisoners.<sup>1</sup> Those who remained in the ranks at the time of the retreat reached their destination.”<sup>2</sup>

At the bar again, Mexia took up his quarters in the fort, and was unmolested for ten days. He had already, during the preceding day's enforced delay, dispatched messengers to his friends in the interior, notifying them of his arrival, and he expected help soon from them. Time passed, however, and no assistance came. He began to fear that his dispatches had miscarried, but had no means of sending duplicates. At the same time conditions rapidly became critical in the fort. There was little ammunition and less food and no money to buy more, while the troops as a result of their hardships were becoming very discontented. Moreover, Gomez was organizing for resistance in Tampico and rousing the people against Mexia by declaring that his followers were Texans and bent upon the overthrow of the nation.<sup>3</sup> In the face of all these difficulties, it seemed “most prudent,” as Mexia expressed it, “to abandon his position and go to Texas; there to follow up the campaign against the tyranny of the military clergy.” Accordingly, he chartered the American schooner “Halcyon” for \$2,000, and with what was left of his force, increased by the company of the Mexican artil-

<sup>1</sup>Including some of the wounded, thirty-one were captured. See list of names in Edward's *History of Texas*, 266-7; *Niles' Register*, XLIX 338-9; Dienst Collection, I 3.

<sup>2</sup>Mexia to Governor of Texas, December 7, 1835.—Archives of Texas, File 13, No. 1256, Diplomatic Correspondence.

<sup>3</sup>Proclamation of Gregorio Gomez (translation) November 18, 1835.—Archives of Texas, File 13, No. 1254, Diplomatic Correspondence.

lery stationed in the fort, he embarked on November 28 for the mouth of the Brazos, where he arrived on December 3.

Of the thirty-one prisoners left in Tampico, three died of their wounds, and the rest were tried by court martial and shot on December 14, 1835.<sup>1</sup> Every effort was made to save them by the American residents in Tampico, and even by some of the prominent Mexicans. Ransoms were offered for all or a part of them, but to no avail; the authorities wanted to make an example of them to deter similar expeditions in the future. The decision of the court was read to the condemned men on Saturday morning, forty-eight hours before the time set for the execution, and during the interval they prepared a "dying statement" in which they re-asserted their innocence of "either participating or colleaguings with any person or party, having for its object the revolutionizing or disturbing in any manner the tranquility of the government of Mexico." They declared that they had embarked in New Orleans believing that they were to be landed in Texas and with the understanding that it was optional with them whether or not they should volunteer in her defense after they arrived. Many of them simply seized this opportunity to get a free passage to Texas. Six days out from New Orleans, the rumor spread that there was on board with his staff a Mexican general who was going to co-operate with the Texans; but when land was sighted two days later they were told that it was Mexico and that they were to attack Tampico. Some fifty of the men—thirty-five of them Creoles of New Orleans who had presumably known from the beginning the destination of the expedition—volunteered, but the rest held aloof. After the shipwreck, when they had dried their clothes in the fort, they were offered arms and ammunition, "and never having been soldiers before, some probably took them from curiosity, others from necessity, and

<sup>1</sup>A writer in *El Correo Atlantico*, of May 9, 1836 (the liberal organ in New Orleans) questioned the legality of this execution, declaring that, if they were considered as soldiers at all, they should have been treated as prisoners of war; and if they were considered as pirates, a military court had no jurisdiction over them. The New Orleans press as a whole seems to have considered the execution justifiable (see editorial from the *New Orleans Bee*, in Edward's *History of Texas*, 260-1); but in support of the *Correo Atlantico's* position it should be noted that France, in 1838, demanded and received an indemnity of 20,000 *piastres* for two of the prisoners who were Frenchmen (see Blanchard and Dauzats' *San Juan de Ulúa*, 241).

others from compulsion;" none of the men were acquainted with each other, and before they could reach an understanding among themselves the officers huddled them together and began the march. "Having no other resource," they conclude, "we were necessarily compelled . . . reluctantly to join the party, with a full determination not to act in concert with it, but submit ourselves as prisoners of war, . . . and without one single exception every individual of the undersigned from motives of conscience and oppression added to the shameful abduction or deception practiced on us, chose to throw ourselves on the clemency and mercy of the authorities."<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this statement is obvious. On Sunday morning, through the kindness of the priest who attended the prisoners, it was transmitted to an American resident and by him translated and submitted, along with a petition for the pardon of the unfortunate men, to the commandant.<sup>2</sup> Considering the motive of the declaration, therefore, some allowance should be made for exaggeration. Exclusive of the thirteen officers of the general's staff and the fifteen men of the crew, the expedition numbered a hundred and thirty-three men,<sup>3</sup> and it is hardly credible that a bare one-fourth of these knew the true destination of the schooner. Almost without any previously concerted plan the hundred hoodwinked and indignant men could have seized the ship and returned to New Orleans, or, at least, could have refused to fight after going ashore. The sort of individual who could be induced to assault a garrisoned town through compulsion or curiosity to handle a gun would not make good military material, and neither Mexia nor the New Orleans committee would have dared to take such desperate chances. Some of them may have been deceived;<sup>4</sup> but prudence certainly

<sup>1</sup>Declaration of the prisoners, in Edward's *History of Texas*, 264-6, and *Niles' Register*, XLIX, 364.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from Tampico (no name signed), December 15, 1835, in Edward's *History of Texas*, 262; *Niles' Register*, XLIX 339-40; Dienst Collection, I 3.

<sup>3</sup>Mexia's report to Governor of Texas, December 9, 1835.—Archives of Texas, File 13, No. 1255, Diplomatic Correspondence.

<sup>4</sup>Mexia's report of twenty desertions during the engagement, would, perhaps, point this way; and four private letters written by the condemned prisoners have found their way into print (see Edward's *History of Texas*, 268; *Niles' Register*, XLIX 339, 365; Dienst Collection, I 3), three of

demanding that the number should be few. As to their claim that enlistment was to be optional after they reached Texas, one may very reasonably ask, in view of the situation there, for what other purpose they would have been likely to go at that time.

Immediately upon his arrival at the mouth of the Brazos, General Mexia wrote to ex-Governor Viesca, stating briefly the failure of his attempt on Tampico, and asking that the governor of Texas meet him in Brazoria and confer with him in the arrangement of his future operations. He begged his friend to lose no time in taking the steps necessary to securing his request, "as," he urged, "it is absolutely requisite that I should be informed of what I have to do."<sup>1</sup> Four days later, having learned that Viesca was not acting as governor of Texas, General Mexia wrote a lengthy account of his expedition, from his embarkation in New Orleans to his arrival at Quintana, and forwarded this, with substantially the same requests that he made of Viesca, to Governor Smith.<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime, matters were occurring in the general council decidedly to the advantage of Mexia. Captain Julian Miracle, just arrived from Mexico, conferred with some of the members of the council on December 5, and reported extensive preparations on the part of the liberals to co-operate with Texas, provided they could be assured that she was not fighting for independence. So

which corroborate their public statement, but this is of no particular significance when we reflect that the Mexicans were expected to read them, too. The writer of the fourth, James Farrell, was twice wounded during the assault, and, obviously, could not have pleaded with any great force a reluctance to the battle, so he contented himself with silence as to details. Bancroft declares (*North Mexican States and Texas*, II 189) that the schooner cleared at the custom house in New Orleans with a cargo of emigrants for Matagorda. This, however, does not, as he thinks, prove that the men were deceived, it was more likely a device for evading interference from the United States authorities. Mexico had lodged complaints at Washington against the assistance which Texas was receiving from the United States, and the government had declared itself unable to interfere so long as the aid was furnished by individuals (see correspondence in *Niles' Register*, L 211-12). And, as has already been seen, the New Orleans committee spoke of all volunteers that it enlisted as emigrants (see letter of October 20, l. c.).

<sup>1</sup>Mexia to Viesca, December 3, 1835.—Archives of Texas, File 13, No. 1252, Diplomatic Correspondence. Translation in Fisher's *Memorials*, 48-9.

<sup>2</sup>Mexia to Governor of Texas, December 7, 1835, l. c.

many conflicting rumors on this subject had reached them that they were uncertain, and it was his mission to ascertain from Governors Viesca and Zavala the real intention of the Texans. Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, and Guadalajara were disaffected, he said, and the leading men of the first, especially, had an understanding with General Mexia, and would give the signal for revolt as soon as they learned the attitude of Texas.<sup>1</sup>

At just this opportune moment the news reached the council of Mexia's situation at Quintana—doubtless through his letter to Viesca,—and without hesitation, on December 6, they passed a resolution for his relief. The contractor for the volunteer army, William Pettus, was instructed to make, in conjunction with Thomas F. McKinney, such provision for the general and his command as would “enable them to proceed into the interior, etc., with the object of carrying the war into the enemy's country.” And General Mexia was requested to “report his plan of operations through the said contractor in writing to the Provisional Government of Texas.”<sup>2</sup> At the same time a committee was appointed to frame an address to the Mexican federalists, explaining the purpose of Texas and asking their co-operation. It seems altogether likely that Pettus set out immediately to carry into effect the resolution for Mexia's relief;<sup>3</sup> but on December 9 Governor Smith vetoed the bill, with the explanation that he had no confidence in Mexia, and opposed, in fact, the policy of entrusting to Mexicans any matter whatever connected with the government. With better reason, he pointed out that the resolution authorized the equipment of Mexia before the council should be apprised of his plans, and

<sup>1</sup>Report of information given by Julian Miracle, December 5, 1835.—Archives of Texas, A, File 2, No. 151. This report is in the handwriting of Austin. It has been published in full in the *QUARTERLY*, V 299-300.

<sup>2</sup>*Journal of the Proceedings of the General Council*, 112.

<sup>3</sup>On the 13th “the accommodations furnished Gen. Mexia” were already “considerable,” and he, with his entire force, had accompanied Colonel Pettus as far as Columbia, on the way to lay his plans before the general council. The time for all this would hardly have been sufficient, if Pettus had waited for the final passage of the bill on December 9.—See Pettus to General Council, December 17, 1835.—Archives of Texas, A, File 2, No. 239

that they had no guarantee from nor control over him; but it was passed over his veto, nevertheless, without alteration.<sup>1</sup>

The next morning, however, a report reached the council that the enemy had large reinforcements on the march to Bexar, and another resolution was hastily passed, asking General Mexia to proceed thither and strengthen the Texans who were besieging the place. He was authorized to draw on the government "for any amount of money necessary in forwarding the objects of said resolution," and a copy of the resolution was sent to him by special express,—James Power, a member of the council volunteering for that service.<sup>2</sup>

Colonel Pettus, in the meantime, after doing what he could to fit out Mexia, had already advised him to repair to Bexar. The easiest route from Quintana was by sea to Copano and thence overland, but the men, while expressing their entire willingness to go, wanted to make the whole trip by land; so Pettus put them aboard the steamboat "Laura," and started up the Brazos, with the intention, perhaps, of going by San Felipe to give Mexia an opportunity of explaining his plans to the general council. Whether Mexia himself expected to go on to Bexar is doubtful. On their arrival at Columbia—probably in the afternoon of the 12th,—Pettus heard that the Texans had begun the storming of Bexar and needed reinforcements. He decided, therefore, to hasten Mexia's force directly to their assistance, but found himself unable to get horses enough for the whole company. His report of what now happened is ambiguous, but it seems that on the 13th most of the Americans, unwilling to wait until transportation could be provided for the whole party, placed themselves under the command of Capt. John M. Allen, and pushed on, while those who were left determined to return to Quintana and proceed by the Copano route. There was no misunderstanding about the separation, and Mexia gave Allen a discharge "of the most flattering kind."<sup>3</sup>

It must have been about this time that Mr. Power arrived with the council's invitation of the 10th, for late in the night of the

<sup>1</sup>*Journal of the Proceedings of the General Council*, 132.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>3</sup>Pettus to General Council, December 17, 1835.—Archives of Texas, A. File 2, No. 239. For the dates see Austin to General Council, December 14, 1835, File 1, No. 20, Diplomatic Correspondence.

15th he reported verbally to the council that he had waited on General Mexia and the latter had declined to co-operate with the volunteers at Bexar.<sup>1</sup> This refusal, however, should not be understood to indicate any pique or lack of interest on Mexia's part. Some of his men, as has been seen, were already on their way to Bexar, and the rest were soon to start with his best wishes; but he believed that his personal services could be more profitably employed elsewhere. Just what his plan was has not transpired, but he had already mounted his horse to accompany Colonel Pettus to San Felipe and lay it before the council when Austin, on his way to the United States, rode into Columbia in the afternoon of the 14th, and he turned back to talk matters over with him. Writing of this conversation, Austin said:

"He has shown me his correspondence with persons of the highest standing, especially a letter which he recd. a few days since by a confidential express from the interior.

"I have not time to write fully on this all important subject, nor will my health (exhausted as I am by the ride down) permit it. . . . I will, therefore, at present, merely say that the general good seems to require:

"First, that Genl. Mexia should return with as little delay as possible to N. Orleans, where his presence is necessary for the furtherance of the plans and combinations that are made and maturing in the interior in favor of federalism, and Texas. These plans are very extensive and are calculated to cover and secure Texas effectually, provided we adhere *strictly*, in words, acts, and deeds to the declarations of the constitution of 7th November last.

"2d. That as a part of his troops marched yesterday, Cap. Allen's company, for Bexar, the balance should proceed to Copano by water, for which purpose they have gone to Velasco, and should take the two long brass sixes and two iron ones, and the arms and shot, which will be useful in the siege of Bexar, or in other operations in that quarter.

"3d. That as he spent 18,000 in this expedition and places the cannon (the two brass ones cost \$400 each) and shot, of which there is a good supply, at the disposition of the provisional govt. of Texas, to be used in defence of the common cause, at least one

<sup>1</sup>Journal of the Proceedings of the General Council, 166.

thousand dollars should be furnished him to meet his present exigencies, for he is without a dollar.

"He requests me to say that whether he goes to Orleans, or wherever he may be, he wishes to be considered a citizen of Texas. . . .

"I will add I have full confidence in the good faith and sincerity of Genl. Mexia in his efforts and desires to serve the cause of Texas."

Austin promised to write full details of the plan from Velasco; and Mexia, then, giving up his trip to San Felipe, decided to return to Quintana and make arrangement for forwarding his men to Copano.<sup>1</sup>

Before leaving Columbia, however, on the 15th, he wrote three letters—to his friend Viesca, to Lieutenant-Governor James W. Robinson, president of the general council, and to Governor Smith. In each he said about the same thing: his sole motive in coming to Texas was to aid the federal cause, and with this object all the men under his command who had not already done so would proceed immediately to Bexar, in accordance with the council's invitation of the 10th. He himself had not as yet decided whether to accompany them or return to New Orleans.<sup>2</sup> In Robinson's letter he enclosed a proclamation to the Mexican soldiers under Cos, urging them to join the federal party; and he asked that his men be supplied with printed copies of this to carry with them to Bexar.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Austin to General Council, December 14, 1835.—Archives of Texas, File 1, No. 20, Diplomatic Correspondence.

<sup>2</sup>Mexia to Viesca, December 15, 1835.—Fisher's *Memorials*, 68; to Robinson and Smith respectively—Archives of Texas, File 13, No. 1262 and File 13, No. 1258, Diplomatic Correspondence.

<sup>3</sup>As a further indication of the sincerity of Mexia's desire to help Texas, this proclamation is worth printing. The picturesque translation in the archives reads:

"General José Antonio Mexia to the besieged forces in Bejar—  
"Soldiers y old companion in arms:

"My want of health prevents me personally appearing before you, for the sole object of which i come to texas, where is defended Mexican Liberty, the Federal constitution, the rights of the insulted and injured citizens against servile ambition—

"in defense of these same rights the fourth batalion have accompanied me in our movements on Queretaro Silao and Guanajuato in 1833 and the same a long time in the presidial campaigns of that time in the year 1832—the[y] assisted in the siege of St. Louis, in support of the same



With matters in this condition, Mr. Power, on the 17th, for some unknown reason made to the council a second report of his mission to General Mexia, supplementing his verbal report of two days before. He said: "I have called on General Mexia at Columbia. He has declined to go to Bexar to join with our people. His object is to go to Copano to join with the two hundred Mexicans who are at Palo Blanco; and thence to take Matamoras, if possible. Mr. Fisher, who is acting Secretary to the General, stated to me that the General could not place his military character at stake by accepting a command under the Provisional Government of Texas, as Mr. Viesca is not Governor."<sup>1</sup> Quite naturally the council did not relish this—all the less, perhaps, because they knew that Bexar had capitulated and the need for reinforcements was not now so pressing. They authorized their president, therefore, in secret session, to instruct Thomas F. McKinney to seize all the cannon, arms, and ammunition, which Mexia had brought to Velasco, and to hold them as security for the money and supplies advanced to him by the government. The general was to be treated "kindly and politely," but must receive no further advances from govern-

principles, with an officer who now abandons them y uses them as instruments in supporting the views of the aristocratic party.

"Companions they deceive you, who informed you that the Texians wish a separation from the Mexican federation; therefore do not believe it—What they desire is what i and all federalists desire, that is the constitution of 1824, and that we should not be governed neither by friars or Aristocrats, that the Nation may enjoy Liberty and that the power of a dictator should not impose upon us the yoke of slavery. the resistance that you are making in the besieged City is in every respect criminal, and the only effect it will produce is your ruin and the ruin of the soldiers that I know are the friends of liberty the knowledge of which grieves my heart.

"In the field there are multitudes of Mexican soldiers Chiefs and officers with whom you should unite, do so and you will accord with my views which is to strengthen the lines of the federation.

"José Antonio Mexia

"Brazoria Decr. 15, 1835."

<sup>1</sup>*Journal of the Proceedings of the General Council*, 174. Without Fisher's statement, there is nothing particularly objectionable in this, and it is possible that he did not put the matter quite so badly as Power reported. It had always been his opinion that Texas could best concentrate the liberals by placing Viesca in the executive seat, and he perhaps expressed this opinion to Power.

ment stores.<sup>1</sup> A little later, during the evening session, a new face was put on the matter by the receipt of Colonel Pettus's report, and Austin's letter of the 14th, but the express to McKinney and already departed, so they were referred to a select committee and action upon them was deferred for nearly a week. On the 23rd, however, the committee reported, "that on examining all the papers and documents concerning the plans of co-operating with . . . the people of Texas, from General Mexia and others, Mexican Liberals, they would advise that the orders . . . to Thomas F. McKinney, of the seventeenth instant, be countermanded, as your committee can find no reason for declining the aid of General Mexia; . . . and advise that the advances . . . made by the Government agents be respected." This report was adopted and a copy dispatched forthwith to McKinney;<sup>2</sup> but fortunately Mexia had already relieved him of his unpleasant task by surrendering, the day before the first order arrived, all the property in his possession.<sup>3</sup> He had become convinced that his services were no longer either "desired or necessary" in Texas and had decided to return to New Orleans.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Robinson to McKinney, December 17, 1835.—Archives of Texas, Vol. 3, pp. 3-4 of records in vault No. 1.

<sup>2</sup>*Journal of the Proceedings of the General Council*, 195.

<sup>3</sup>McKinney to Council, December 29, 1835.—Archives of Texas, Vol. 3, pp. 172-3 of records in vault No. 1.

<sup>4</sup>One cannot but respect him for the dignified letter in which he announced his determination to Governor Smith. He said (Archives of Texas, File 13, No. 1263, Diplomatic Correspondence):

"Sir:

"Since my arrival in Texas on the 3d inst. I have communicated to Your Excellency all my movements, the views with which I came, the causes that prompted me to undertake the Expedition against Tampico, and finally that I was returning to this place, with the intention of sending my troops, cannon, arms, and ammunition to the Copano. During all this time I have not received a single official communication, and this circumstance, and the last success of Bexar does convince me that my services are neither of any utility in Texas, nor are they desired or necessary. Thus persuaded I have determined to return to New Orleans, where acting in concert with the Federalists in the Interior I shall be able to employ my time and person in the common cause of the Nation, which I believe is the one which at present Texas sustains. . . .

"I leave here with Thomas F. McKinney Esqr. the cannon, arms, and

Thus ended, in its relation to Texas, the Tampico expedition. Succeeding, it would have concentrated federalist opposition in the eastern States, would have diverted Santa Anna's attention from Texas, and eventually, no doubt, after the capitulation of Cos, would have drawn Texas into active co-operation with the liberals; the dictator might have been overthrown on his own soil, the "republican principles" of the constitution of 1824 preserved, and the Texas declaration of independence obviated thereby. But failing, the press of events and the dissensions in the government prevented the Texans—though its potential advantages were clearly realized—from helping Mexia in a second venture. One cannot but feel that Mexia personally was treated by the Texans with little consideration. Those who knew him best, Austin and McKinney, were confident of his integrity and sincere patriotism; yet the governor ignored, and private citizens insulted him.<sup>1</sup>

After Mexia's return to New Orleans the United States grand jury, on May 16, 1836, found an indictment against him for filibustering, but the records do not show that the case ever came to trial. In 1839, still trying to establish republicanism, he was captured by Bustamante and shot. In the same year, George Fisher presented to the fifth congress a memorial, asking that the survivors of the Tampico expedition be placed upon the same footing as regular volunteers in the Texan army and be awarded bounty lands. But the committee to whom the petition was referred reported that while they were well satisfied that his prayer was "not without merit," they thought it would be inexpedient to take further action upon it at that time.

ammunition, which belonged to my Expedition, in order that they may be sent to the Copano, agreeably to the Resolutions of the Honorable the General Council.

"I am Your Excellency's Most Obedient Servant,

"José Antonio Mexia.

"Quintana 23d December 1835.

"To His Excellency the Governor of Texas,

"San Felipe de Austin."

<sup>1</sup>McKinney to General Council, December 29, 1835, l. c.